Weakness of Merger of LSUS and La Tech

The obvious weakness of the merger is the reckless speed with which it has been proposed. The EKA Report was released on February 16, approved by the Regents’ eight working days later on the 26th, and I received a copy of SB 527 providing for the merger on March 2, only three days after approval of the report by the Regents.

It is evident that the merger bill was being written by legislators from NE Louisiana before any planning had taken place. The bill provides for the immediate elimination of LSU Shreveport and the transfer of over $100M in assets and $18M in LSUS Foundation Funds to the UL System. Also, the lives of our students, faculty and staff have been disrupted without any consultation and planning. These students and university personnel are concerned that their plans and livelihoods are in jeopardy.

I must ask the question, would business leaders divest themselves of their business and assets without a plan or agreement as to how such a merger would affect them, their employees, customers, or clients? I doubt that they or you would. There is no merger plan, no list of programs coming to Shreveport. LSUS is being eliminated, a “take over” as it is being called by some, with a Tech Campus being treated in Shreveport but located primarily in Ruston.

The result of this rush to action is a push-back and a backlash because the recommendation of the consultant has been ignored which clearly states that a requirement is “to develop, and approve a detailed Consolidation Implementation Plan prior to undertaking any of the formal transfer and consolidation measures.

Also, the proposed merger would create a situation where you would now have two competing Systems in the Metro area; the LSU System (LSUHSCS) and the UL System (La Tech).

A much stronger solution for the Metro area would be La Tech in the LSU System in Shreveport/Bossier. Tech should join with LSUS on the Shreveport Campus integrate programs where possible and transition into one university with LSUS in concert with the LSUHSCS. This would create a formidable research enterprise and economic engine for Northwest Louisiana and the S/B Area.

Finally, everyone should be aware that the BCR funding formula is unfair as it does not account for the diverse and different roles and missions of our universities properly. For example, LSUS is the most non-traditional campus in the state located in the same metro area with two community colleges with open admissions and lower tuition and over 10,000 students.

Eighty percent of the LSUS graduates do not start their careers as new freshmen but are transfer or older students. LSUS is primarily an urban comprehensive commuter university with strong admission standards and higher tuition, as it should be. Thus LSUS has been transitioning to an upper undergraduate, graduate institution to meet the diverse higher education needs of a metropolitan area. Unfortunately, the Regents’ fail to recognize how this role and mission of LSUS is different from that of the traditional university.

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